

Unfurling

by CN

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Summary: There's nothing quite like the feeling of feeling betrayed and hurt by the people you love the most. Sandy seems to be learning that lesson a lot these days.

1. Chapter 1

Soâ€|I finally remembered to post this! Catsâ€|I wrote this like eight months ago or somethingâ€|

Note: This is set almost exactly four years **before** _Petals_.

The gang (by the way, they're Ham-Human) is around 17-18 ish. I don't know. How old would you be in your senior year of high school?

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> Unfurling
 Chapter One: **_Breath Held In Anticipation
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"Sixty-two months," she said, closing her eyes as she leaned her head further onto his shoulder.

"Mmhmmâ€|is that how long we've been together?" Maxwell asked, seeming slightly distracted, as he flipped the page.

"You remembered?" Sandy Torahamu exclaimed more than asked as she oriented her head to look at him, a new shine forming in her eyes.
"You know, Maxy-"

"I didn't really rememberâ€|62 months is a little over five years ago, around the time I won that regional spelling bee and I know that was around the time we started going out. So unless you're counting the anniversary of me winning the bee-"

Sandy sighed as she pressed her finger onto Maxwell's lips. She adjusted herself back against his shoulders and removed her finger.

"And here I thought you had been keeping track. You sure know how to kill a romantic mood, Maxwell Librius," she teased, although she did know that deep down, this Ham-Human hardly had a romantic cell in his body.

Maxwell, getting the hint, closed his book (he'd have to return to deriving the equation for the magnetic field of an iron solenoid later). He set it down on the park's soft grass and leaned his head against Sandy's.

"What's wrong, Sandy?" he asked quietly as he watched the river before them flow. For a few moments, all that the two teenage Ham-Humans heard was the rushing of the river before Sandy decided to speak.

"It's just that sixty-two months is a long time, Maxy," she said as she started to wring the life out of a corner of her picnic blanket.

"You're not saying that it's been too long, right?" Maxwell asked in a slightly panicked voice as he sat up straight, causing Sandy to lose her support of his shoulder and fall back a little.

"â€|Sorry!" Maxwell said sheepishly as he watched the girl readjust herself. This time, she decided not to use him as a support.

She brought her knees to her chest and wrapped her hands around them. Her quietness seemed so foreign to Maxwell; this girl rarely ever found herself speechlessâ€|except when she was madâ€| Maxwell could only imagine what was going on through her mind.

"No," she answered at length. Maxwell, fiddling with the grass around him to rid himself of the nervousness, looked up. "Sixty-two months hasn't been too longâ€|Actually, sometimes, it feels like it hasn't been long enough."

"Sandy?"

Sandy dug her head into her knees and sniffled. When she looked up, Maxwell was shocked to see that there were a few small tears breaking from her lime green eyes.

"Maxy, some people hardly last two monthsâ€|You can do the math, but we've been together so much longer. We have something specialâ€|. I think that much is obvious, but I don't think you feel the same way I do." As she finished speaking, she turned her head from him and looked the other way.

Maxwell got up and walked to the side that Sandy was facing. He leaned down to her level and smiled.

"If you think a few tears are going to get rid of me that easily, then you're sorely mistaken," he said as he wiped some of the tears from her eyes. "I'm not very romantic, but I don't think there's any way to describe just how much you mean to me in mere words."

Sandy bit her lip as she tried to hide her smile. Why couldn't she stay mad this boy for long?

"Maxyâ€|that's soâ€|"

"Romantic?" he asked eagerly, happy to see her smile.

"Not exactly."

"Surprisingly articulate?"

"Well yes, but not what I was looking forâ€|"

"Adorable?"

"Corny." She giggled a little, and by doing so she let out a small hiccup, which just caused Maxwell to laugh.

"You're right, though," Maxwell started to say as the two watched the pink and orange clouds blend into the sunset's canvas, "most people can hardly keep a relationship up for a few weeks, let alone five years-"

"Five years and two months," Sandy corrected as she leaned her head against Maxwell's shoulder.

"Right, of course. I mean, look at your friend Bijou. She went through how many boyfriends before she settled on Daichi?"

"That's just Bij. She's just picky like that, but she and Daichi have been going strong for a while, and I just want her to be happyâ€|"

Maxwell looked down at Sandy and found himself being mesmerized by the way the rays reflected on her brilliant eyes.

"You're amazing, Sandy."

She snuggled closer to him.

"I know."

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At that very moment, a few miles away at the local high school, a white-haired Ham-Human paced the stage of the auditorium nervously.

Bijou Ribon was not in a good place at the moment.

"Oh _zut_â€|_zut zut zut_â€|The induction's in an hour and the food hasn't arrivedâ€|oh _zut zut zut_."

"Bij, stop pacing and relax. The food'll arrive any minute and the

French Honor Society Induction will go off without a hitch," Pashmina Mafura assured from one of the seats before Bijou.

"I don't know, maybe I should call the caterers again," Bijou said as she stopped pacing and looked at her purse, at one corner of the stage, in which her cell phone was just calling out to her.

"Maybe that's not such a good idea." Pashmina mused as she stood up and headed towards the stage.

"Why not?" Bijou asked indignantly.

"Incase you don't remember, you're forbidden from talking to anyone on the phone since you nearly bit the caterer's head off last time," she answered as she climbed the steps of the stage and approached her friend.

"Well the caterer's cutting it awfully close!" the French girl cried indignantly. "Maybe I should just go over to the bakery andâ€œ Bijou was suddenly cut off by a new voice entering the stage from a side entrance.

"That won't be necessary. I just talked to the caterer over the phone. He's on his way here," Crystal Donaldson explained as she stepped across the stage, her heels making a very professional clicking sound as she walked.

Bijou looked as though a huge weight had just been kicked off of her.

"_Merci_ Crystal!" she exclaimed as she ran a hand through her hair. She sighed with relief as she looked around: the auditorium, decorated with red white and blue ribbons and banners with French sayings scribbled all over them. It wasn't easy setting up everything, and there was still the food that had yet to arriveâ€œ

Setting up the induction ceremony for the French Honor Society was so not fun, especially when the so-called French teachers left all the work to one person because she was the only one in the school who was a native French speaker! Bijou rolled her eyes as she thought of the laziness of her teachers.

She then looked at Pashmina and Crystal.

"I can't thank you guys enough for helping me with this. I mean, I know how picky I can beâ€œ"

"Yeah, believe me, we do too," Crystal said under her breath just loud enough for Bijou to hear.

"What Crystal means is that we're happy to help," Pashmina explained. "And, as long as we're promised free French food, I see no reason to complain."

"Yeah, it was either go to another one of Daddy's board meetings or come here, so no brainer really," Crystal explained. Just as Bijou was about to respond, the ringtone to Crystal's phone went off.

"Oooh! That's the caterer!" She said excitedly as she grabbed her phone out of her pocket. "He said he'd call me when he arrived," she explained as she flipped the phone open and put it to her mouth.
"Uh-huhâ€|okayâ€|gotcha! Be right there!" As she closed her phone, she spun around on her heel.

"Are they here?" Bijou asked anxiously. "I should go see if all the food made it-"

"I think the caterer would rather I get the foodâ€|seeing as how you screamed your head off at him when he ran five minutes late," Crystal spoke as she looked over her shoulder. "I'll see you later!" she cried, before Bijou had time to protest, as she walked off the stage and out through an adjacent exit.

After Crystal left, Pashmina and Bijou stepped off the stage. They walked down the auditorium's aisles until they finally settled upon a row and sat down.

Bijou, leaning back and relaxing for the first time in a while, kicked off her high heels and massaged her sore feet. She looked over at Pashmina, also relaxing with her back pressed against her chair, and noticed that the brown-haired Ham-Human was smiling.

"What's so funny, Pashy?" Bijou asked. In response, Pashmina just shook her head and closed her eyes.

"Can you believe that girl is complaining about having to go a board meeting?" she asked as she slowly opened her eyes and looked over at Bijou. "I mean, people work their whole lives to get promoted to a high enough position just to attend a board meeting! I love Crys, really, but cats I hate that girl for having it so easy."

Bijou bit her lip and looked down at the floor for a second. At Pashmina's words, she seemed to fall into a reverie. You wouldn't know, Pashyâ€|

"..Bij? You listening?" Pashmina asked as she noticed the glassy look in her friend's eyes.

"Quoi?" The French girl asked as she snapped her head back to Pashmina. "DesolÃ©eâ€|I just can't keep my mind off the Induction Ceremony," she lied.

"That's ok, it wasn't that important, anyway," Pashmina said. "It's just that, I'm not like shallow or anything, but I wouldn't mind living her life."

"Really?" Bijou asked, titling her large head to the side.

"Oh right, forgive me for forgetting," Pashmina started to tease, "You might not be an heiress, but you live in a house the size of two of my blocks! Oh, and can't forget that car you got for your sixteenth birthdayâ€|or that handbag collection that's worth more than my college fund!" Pashmina leaned her head back further. "Geez, you and Crys make Sandy and me feel like we're living in cardboard boxes!"

Bijou laughed a little too nervously to sound sincere, but Pashmina must not have noticed. "I told toy: Lots of dead, rich uncles, that's

all," she explained as she turned her head to face the stage.

"Not too much longer til the Induction Ceremony begins, hmmm?" Pashmina asked.

Bijou looked at the clock in the back of the auditorium. "Yeah, actually. The inductees should be arriving any minute!" Bijou immediately stood up and started shuffling her way out of the row of seats.

"Relax, Bij! We've gotten everything taken care of," Pashmina reminded as she also stood and started following the French girl out of the auditorium.

Bijou stopped walking just as she got to the auditorium exit. She turned around and faced Pashmina.

"I have to go and greet the inductees and pass out the schedule of events and-"

"Ok, Bij, breathe," Pashmina ordered as she placed her hands on Bijou's shoulders. "Before you get all panicky again, just let me take care of it."

"I have to be the one to greet them," Bijou protested. "So thanks but-"

"I think the inductees would rather be greeted calmly than by you, no offense," Pashmina explained as she let go of her friend.

Bijou looked around. "None taken."

Pashmina smiled. "Kay, now just walk around until it's time for the ceremony to actually beginâ€¦ I'll take care of the rest."

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"I love the fall," Sandy exclaimed as she practically twirled down the sidewalk. "I mean the colors, the first puffs of cold air when you talk, and of course, the shopping for all the new sweaters!"

Maxwell nodded as he examined the colors of the leaves around him; since it was the first week of October, the leaves were just starting to turn from green to the more common colors of fall.

"It is indeed a beautiful season," he agreed.

As the two Ham-Humans walked down the path together, Sandy placed her hand into his.

"Hopefully, we'll spend a lot more seasons together," she said softly as she leaned her head against his shoulder.

Maxwell smiled. "Now you're the one who's starting to sound corny-oww!" he cried after receiving a slightly strong punch from the girl on his arm.

"It doesn't sound as corny when a girl says it," Sandy explained in a matter-of-fact voice.

"Yeah sure, keep believing that-oww! Stop doing that!"

The couple continued walking down the streets of the neighborhood until they reached Maxwell's house. They stopped at the mailbox in front of the house for a large bunch of mail was practically bursting out of the box.

"Looks like you got a bunch of mail," Sandy said as she tapped her fingers against the metal of Maxwell's mailbox.

"It's just from a bunch of colleges that want me to apply," Maxwell explained as he started flipping through all the college letters.

"Too bad all those colleges don't know that you're not interested." Sandy sighed as she leaned against the mailbox.

Maxwell, who had been listening to Sandy, suddenly stopped at one letter in particular. All it took was one look at the insignia and the return address of the letter. He couldn't believe it.

La Sorbonne

"Huh? What?" Maxwell looked up upon noticing that he must've been staring quite strangely at that letter.

Sandy rolled her eyes as she leaned over to look at the letter. "Never mind, just what letter are you staring at?" as her eyes casually scanned the envelope in Maxwell's hands, she didn't seem so nervous. However, as she saw the insignia and the return address, she felt a sudden tightening feeling come upon her.

"Sorbonne? Isn't that in France? You didn't request information from them, did you? You're not interested in applying there, right?" Cats, she felt like Bij by getting so worked up, but this was no small matter. She looked at Maxwell, her eyes shaking ever so slightly, and her breath held in anticipation.

"N-no! Of course not," Maxwell lied. "I get tons of letters from schools," he reminded, shaking the mass of envelopes in his hands as proof.

"Yeah, but it's kind of weird, isn't it? I meanâ€|it's a foreign school, all the way in France. That's like the other side of the world from Japan, Maxy." Just by the sound of her voice, Maxwell could tell that Sandy was getting distraught.

"I don't want you to go that far to school," Sandy added quietly as she cast her eyes downward.

Maxwell bit his lip as he looked at her. Of all the letters from all the colleges he had received so farâ€"and he had received manyâ€"the letter from Sorbonne was probably the most exciting one he had received.

He knew the type of education he would receive from this world-renown universityâ€|and to see that Sorbonne was interested enough in him to actually send a letter from halfway around the worldâ€|

He laughed nervously, and Sandy looked up. "Relax. I told you that I get letters from everywhere. It doesn't matter if it's from the local community college or the most prestigious university in Europe: If a school's interested in you, they won't stop bugging you."

Sandy let out a sigh of relief. "Sorryâ€|I don't know what got into me. Maybe it's just that you're smart and I know you probably want to go to one of those top-notch schoolsâ€|Just look at the bright side, Ham Sapien University is a pretty good school itself!"

"Ham Sapien University?" Maxwell asked, wondering how that school came up.

"Yeahâ€|I mean, I'm pretty sure I'll get in, and you'll definitely get in, and it's only about half an hour from hereâ€|it's the perfect school," Sandy explained. She raised her eyebrows and looked at Maxwell quizzically. "We've talked about this, haven't we?"

Maxwell wasn't sure what to say. "Ummâ€|yeah, sorry, it slipped my mind momentarily." Desperate for a change of subject, he immediately started speaking again. "Heyâ€|let's go inside. My mom's making her apple cider tonight, and I know how much you love her cider."

Sandy nodded her head and, lacing her fingers with his, walked with him into his house.

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"Ribon!"

Bijou winced as she heard that sound. Here she was, trying her best to relax and kill time before she had to read her opening speech, in the lobby of the high school's auditorium, and all of a sudden, this voice had disrupted her thoughts.

Well, not so much the voice as the person behind the voice, actuallyâ€|

Bijou turned around and faced the orange and white-haired Ham-Human coming up to her.

"What do you want, Haruna?" She asked as she started to massage her temples, knowing the type of headaches Hamtaro Haruna caused every time they ran into each other.

"Well, is that anyway to talk to your lighting crew manager?" he asked as he came up to her.

Bijou resisted the urge to roll her eyes. "_You're_ the lighting crew? I hope you know you're late by over an hour!"

"Cats, loser, relax," a third voice piped. Hamtaro and Bijou turned to see Sparkle walk into the lobby.

"And I hope you know you're late, too, Sparkle," Bijou said angrily. "Why did you volunteer to perform at the Induction Ceremony if you weren't even going to come on time?"

"Geez. Is that any type of gratitude? I'm performing for _free_ for the loser Spanish Honor Society inductees—"

"It's the French Honor Society," Bijou corrected. "Remember, you were inducted last year, although I'm still not sure how exactly you got in."

Sparkle gave Bijou a sarcastic smile. "I'm a girl of many talents. Anyway, Hamtaro," she turned to face the boy and put her hand on his shoulder. "Be sure to keep the spotlight extra bright for me, ok?" she asked in a sickeningly sweet voice as her hand ran up and down his arm.

"Of course, Sparkle," Hamtaro said.

"Get to the lighting booth, Haruna, and go to the sound crew, Sparkle, and get yourself a microphone," Bijou ordered as she came between the two Ham-Humans.

"Whatever, loser. I'll see you later, Hamtaro," Sparkle said as she started to walk away. "Adoo!"

"It's adieu!" Bijou cried as she watched the brown-haired pop star walk into the auditorium. She turned around and saw Hamtaro shaking his head.

"Didn't I just tell you to get to the lighting booth?" she asked.

"I have my freshmen crew members taking care of the lighting," Hamtaro explained.

"Well shouldn't you be supervising them or something?"

Hamtaro shrugged. "Eh..they'll be fine."

"Then why did you even show up? Are you going to release mosquitoes into the auditorium? Are you going to switch my lip balm with glue again?" Bijou asked, listing off a couple of the many pranks he had previously pulled on her.

"No, Ribonâ€¦you should know by now that I never repeat pranks. I just came because I know how worked up you get over the smallest details. It's kind of amusing to watch you go all panicky," he explained.

"Bite me," Bijou hissed.

"Gladly," Hamtaro replied. "Cats you're easy to tease. You'll never make it in the real world with that sort of attitude."

"She will if she has people who care for her to support her," a new voice said. Bijou, upon hearing this voice, smiled while Hamtaro rolled his eyes.

A black-haired, golden-eyed teenager, almost a full head taller than Bijou, came into the lobby. He came up to Bijou and put his hands around her waist.

"How're you doing? You told me that you were feeling a little stressed," the boy asked as he looked down at the French girl in his arms.

"I'm fine, Daichi," Bijou replied as she leaned up and kissed the boy's cheek. "You're so sweet for coming all the way here."

"He's not bothering you, is he?" Daichi asked as he nodded in Hamtarō's direction.

"Relax, Aito," Hamtarō said. "I was just about to leave anyway."

With that said, Hamtarō turned around and quickly left the scene. He wasn't very fond of either party in the lobby at the moment.

Bijou glanced at her watch. "I better go, too. The ceremony starts in a few minutes."

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"Mother, I told you, colleges like it if I have activities other than singing on my application!" Sparkle explained into her cell phone as she paced up and down one of the sides of the stage. She felt like snapping her cell phone shut, but her mother would just come down to the school herself and drag her out of there.

"I told you, Sparkle, that a singer like you does not need college! So stop wasting time at this silly induction ceremony and get to your sound check now!!"

Some members of the sound crew were walking in, so Sparkle lowered her voice.

"Just let me do this mother, pleaseâ€|"

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Bijou walked into the auditorium after checking the buffet (which Crystal had setup so beautifully that Bijou practically cut off the girl's circulation when she hugged her in thanks), and she realized that she had left her purse on the corner of the stage.

She walked across the stage and picked up her purse, and that's when she realized her cell phone was vibrating. She opened her purse and dug out the phone. It was a message from Maxwell.

"Hey, what do you do when you want to go to a school but you know that it will break your girlfriend's heart?"

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Daichi Aito- my own original character. Literally, his name translates into Great wisdom and Affection.

This chapter just focuses on the snippets of what's going to happen in the story.

The main plot is basically what happens when Bijou gives Maxwell advice and what it does to Sandy. Not only that, this story focuses in on a secret that Bijou's been keeping for as long as she's known everyone.

In reality, this is more of a Sandy/Maxwell fic and a Sandy/Bijou friendship story than anything else. It's really not a Hamijou at all (but that's the point of Petals anyway).

So tell me what you think!

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2. Idiots and Snobs

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> Unfurling
 Chapter Two: **_Idiots and Snobs
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Bijou could hardly believe it as she snapped her phone shut.

Maxwell wants to apply to a school that would break Sandy's heart? Bijou thought. Why would a certain school upset Sandy...? Bijou speculated for a bit as she walked across the auditorium's stage, noticing the inductees that were already starting to sit themselves down in the first few rows.

Cats! Maxwell's message was distracting her from her duty to the French Honor Society! She tried to momentarily shake the message from her brain as she went to the side of the stage.

Would she mind if Daichi went to a particular school? Not really, unless of course that school was particularly faraway, for she would hardly ever see him.

That must be it, Bijou decided, smiling slightly because she figured it out. Her smile immediately faded when she remembered that this school, according to Maxwell, was not exactly the one Sandy had in mind for him.

Perhaps Sandy needed a good talking to. Yes, all Bijou had to do was explain to Sandy that the school Maxwell had in mind couldn't possibly be that faraway, right? But then again, this was really a matter between Sandy and Maxwellâ€¦But Maxwell had asked for Bijou's advice so should she stay out of it?

Bijou put a hand over her eyes and sighed as she massaged her temples for the second time that day. She would talk to Maxwell later, she supposed.

"-Mother, I told you, I'll be at the sound check in a couple of hours, and I am really not in the mood to hear any more of this! You make no sense sometimes! No, I'm doing this, and if you say I can't, then I'll take away that 10 you get from my paycheck every year. Good-bye!"

Everyone at the side of the stage (and perhaps a few of the inductees who were sitting in the front row for the voice was so incredibly loud) turned to see Sparkle shove her phone into her designer handbag. It took her a few seconds to realize that everyone was quiet, and also that everyone had been staring directly at her.

Sparkle took a couple of steps, yet the eyes of everyone still remained on her.

"What?" she asked, obviously annoyed. It was then that everyone decided to resume their conversations and take their eyes off of her.

"Common folk can be so stupid," Sparkle mumbled under her breath. "Why am I saying 'can be'?" she laughed as she enjoyed this little joke to herself.

"Sparkle," Bijou called as she walked over to the singing sensation. The French girl lowered her voice as she asked. "Is everything alright?" she tried to look as indifferent and casual as possible as she pretended to check the microphone battery on Sparkle's back.

"Of course it is," the brunette snapped as she glanced at her nails. "Why do you care?"

"That was quite the performance you just put on," Bijou explained as she walked around Sparkle to make sure that the actual microphone was in its proper place. "I just want to make sure you're ready to perform tonight."

"Am I ready to perform?" Sparkle asked as she slapped Bijou's hand away. She stepped back yet lowered her voice so as not to cause another scene.

"I am one of the biggest names in teen pop music right now. I have performed more concerts than you'll ever go to. I have the numbers of all the major record producers on my speed dial. I'm a big deal. You don't get to my status unless you have pure talent. And you have to bring that talent on at a moment's notice sometimes. So don't you ask if I'm ready to perform at a stupid induction ceremony. I was born ready."

Bijou forced herself to not roll her eyes. Somebody really had to remind Sparkle that her 'talent' was all mostly microphone and that the record label really just loved her tween-friendly face.

"You just sounded really upset," she reminded.

"Well my mother makes me go through mood swings. She can be _so_ demanding," Sparkle complained.

"I know the feeling," Bijou admitted quietly.

"Eww, Ribon," Sparkle cried as she waved her index finger in Bijou's face. "Don't you _ever_ say that you and I have anything in common ever again. We are nothing alike. And don't pretend like you care about what I'm going through. I hate fake people, you know." And without another word, Sparkle walked away and left Bijou in an ever more frustrated state.

The French girl walked across the stage. It was time for the ceremony to begin, anyway. She had to clear her mind of all things that weren't the French Honor Society. However, that became a little more difficult when, the moment she reached the podium, the spotlight immediately became so incredibly strong that Bijou had to put her hand over her wincing eyes to block the light.

She had a feeling that, up in the lighting booth, Hamtaro Haruna was having a really good laugh.

It was people like Haruna and Sparkle, idiots and snobs, that made Bijou's job a little harder.

She waited for a few seconds and the spotlight eventually dwindled down; Bijou seized the moment.

"_Bonsoir tout le monde _and welcome to the annual French Honor Society induction Ceremony!.."

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A few hours later, Maxwell Librius eagerly answered the knock on his door.

"I'm glad you came," he said, gesturing for the girl to come inside.

"Is Sandy here?" Bijou asked as she stepped inside.

"No, actually, she left a couple of hours ago," Maxwell explained as he led the girl into his family room.

"If we're here to talk about what I think then shouldn't she be here?" Bijou asked. She unbuttoned her jacket and sat across from Maxwell, staring at the boy from across the coffee table.

"Not really," Maxwell said sheepishly. He was fidgeting with his hands, and it was then that Bijou realized that he had a large envelope lying on the couch beside him.

"Why not?" Bijou asked quizzically as she eyed the envelope.

"Well she tends to get overemotional sometimes," Maxwell explained. Bijou's attention suddenly snapped back to the boy.

"You do realize that you're talking about one of my best friends

who's also your girlfriend, right? And if she thinks that you might go really faraway for college, I think she has the right to be emotional."

"But it's just that I hadn't even opened the envelope yet before she started worrying. She's just so freaked out that I want to go to school out of the country. She wants me to go to Ham Sapien University," Maxwell explained.

"That's a really good school and it's close by; I can understand why she wants you to go there," Bijou said, trying to hide the offense in her voice. She had actually thought about going to that very same school.

"But I got sent an application from this really great school, although it's faraway from hereâ€|" Maxwell trailed off, and Bijou found herself getting angrier with the boy. He was obviously persistent on this school.

"You don't have to go really faraway to get a good education. In fact, there are really amazing schools here in Japan," Bijou reminded.

"But this is a really good school," Maxwell insisted as he wrung his hands nervously.

"No one really cares how good of a school you end up going to these days. It's about how well you're able to perform there," Bijou explained. "So if you want to go to this 'really good school' in hopes of getting a really good job, I wouldn't recommend it."

"But it's such a good school," Maxwell repeated as he started to bite his lip. Bijou rolled her eyes and stood up.

"Then what do you want from me? Permission to apply?" Bijou asked angrily. She knew she was taking out her stress from the induction ceremony on him, but at the moment, Maxwell was acting like a child.

"No," Maxwell responded, keeping his voice calm. "I just wanted to know your opinion about this school, and since you're also one of Sandy's best friends, I want to know what you will happen to her if I decide to apply here," he explained as he glanced upwards at Bijou.

"I'm not an encyclopedia, Maxwell," Bijou started to say as she lowered her voice. She turned her head to look down at him and then sat back down on the couch. "I don't know about every school, you know."

"I know, but I'm pretty sure that you'll be able to tell me about this one. You told me once a while ago that you might apply here," Maxwell reminded.

"Which school?" Bijou asked as she glanced back to the envelope beside Maxwell.

Maxwell sighed and picked up the envelope. He looked at it for a few seconds before he turned it around to show Bijou.

"Sorbonne."

Bijou's mouth couldn't help but fall open.

"Sorbonne sent you an application?" she asked at length. Maxwell put on a weak smile and nodded.

Bijou couldn't help but be amazed. Sorbonne would be up in the ranks of Harvard and Oxford. They had thousands of kids applying to them every year, so to think that such a good school would contact Maxwell and actually send him an application? It was like saying that they had already accepted Maxwell, and the two Ham-Humans in the room knew that.

And it was an amazing school, one that Bijou's mother and father had both attended. One that Bijou's mother, in hopes of continuing this tradition, was making Bijou apply to.

"Well I can't lie and say that it's not a good school," Bijou responded quietly as she kept her eyes glued to the insignia on the envelope.

"Do you think I should apply?" Maxwell asked.

"I don't see why not if you think you can get in." Again, Bijou took her time to answer as she tried to comprehend how such a wonderful school actually contacted him. Well, Maxwell was very intelligent. But still, a school as good as Sorbonne was constantly filled with applications from thousands of other students, so to think that it actually took its time to get in touch with Maxwellâ€|

There was a silence in the room as the two Ham-Humans thought. Of course he would get in. If a school sends an application to someone, that person is almost guaranteed admission. Bijou tried to imagine what would happen if Daichi applied that farâ€|then again, she didn't have the right to be hypocritical since she was also planning on applying to Sorbonne.

"Sorbonne isn't faraway like China, Maxwell. France is literally on the other side of the world. This will kill Sandy," Bijou reminded as the two looked straight into each other's eyes.

"I know," Maxwell responded simply. "But she isn't the only person who influences where I apply."

"But she's still important," Bijou rebutted as she leaned in further. "You've been together for over five years, Maxwell. You have to care for her enough to at least consider how upset she will be."

"I'll be upset, too," the boy reminded, slightly indignant.

"You sure aren't acting like it," Bijou countered.

"I'll miss her; I do care for her a lot," Maxwell explained.

"Then you really shouldn't be having this conversation with me," Bijou explained as she tilted her head slightly to the side. "I would suggest applying to any school that you liked and thought you had a chance at, but do remember how this will effect everyone around

you."

With that said, the French Ham-human stood up and, without another word, left the room.

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"Why did you tell him to apply?" Daichi asked as he brought his spoon away from his face, unable to think about eating for the moment. "Did you even really think about what you were telling him to do?"

"Why are you getting so emotional about this?" Bijou asked as she took a sip from her straw. "This doesn't involve you."

"Well now that it involves you it sort of does involve me," the boy explained. Bijou gave him her sweetest smile in response, but he wasn't falling for that trickâ€¦not again.

The girl sighed as she lowered her voice, making sure that no one else in the cafeteria would be able to hear them.

"If he gets in, he'll probably goâ€¦and what will happen to Sandy?" the boy asked as he dropped his spoon into his plate. "She'll never forgive you."

"Well it's not like if I said no he wouldn't have applied," Bijou explained. "He just wanted a second opinion. And Sandy never has to know I told Maxwell anything."

"Maybe," Daichi responded, but the way his voice hinted at suspicion, Bijou didn't feel all too safe about her decision anymore.

"Maybe he will get into Sorbonne, but the reality is those schools cost an arm and a leg. Not everyone has that type of money lying around," she reminded. "I don't think there's anyway he can afford it."

"Your parents did," Daichi said. Bijou sighed for a different reason this time. And here we go again. As much as he cared for her, he could never get over how different the two were financially.

"Lots of dead, rich uncles; I told you, I'm no richer than your average girl," she lied, putting on a smile that would seem slightly too reassuring to a close observerâ€¦

"Would you be upset if I applied somewhere faraway like that?" he asked, changing the subject, as he looked at the girl intently.

Bijou's eyebrows furrowed. "What kind of question is that? Of course I would."

Daichi smiled. "That's good to hear."

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December came and swept the land with a cool frost. Kids awaited the first snowfall of the season and adults ran here and there in hopes of getting all the Christmas shopping done before the last minute. Stores adorned themselves with greens and reds and golds and whites. Music stations had started to play all the classic seasonal songs. All in all, for most of the people, it just seemed like a wonderful time.

As for the ones in the middle, the teenagers, well, some were stressing over getting their college essays just right or finishing all their applications and some were eagerlyâ€"better yet, they were anxiouslyâ€"awaiting their early application decisions.

The price of applying Early Action. One would send their application in around early November and expect a response around this time. Normally someone would only apply early to their top school of choice, to know from the start whether or not they were going there. So at the moment, for those students who were awaiting the colleges' responses, December was anything but seasonal.

For one such student, the waiting was about to be over.

"..and so that's why the salt can keep the ice from forming," Maxwell explained as he and Sandy walked through the neighborhood. "Rocks of salt work much better than the fine crystals, of course."

"I'll keep that in mind," Sandy teased as she leaned her head on Maxwell's shoulder. "Maxy, how do you remember all this â€|stuff?" she asked as a puff of hot air escaped her lips.

"You don't find that interesting?" Maxwell asked, sincerely surprised. "I mean with the way the ionic compound of the salt can interact with the hydrogen bonds of â€""

"Your mom," Sandy said as she lifted her head off of his shoulder. Maxwell, in response, simply stared at the girl angrily.

"Well even if chemistry isn't exactly your passion, I hardly feel that such petty, mother-related comments are necessary!"

"No, Maxyâ€|your mom!" Sandy said as she ran down the street to the gate in front of Maxwell's house. In front of Maxwell's house stood his mother, and his father wasn't too far behind her. She was waving her hand in order to get his attention, completely overlooking the strange look Sandy was giving her.

"Mom, what's wrong?" Maxwell asked as he went over to the gate. Maxwell's mother opened the gate and, pushing Sandy to the side, ran over to her son and hugged him.

"Oh I knew you could get in! I just knew you would! No school in the world would be foolish enough to reject you," she cried as she squeezed the life out of him. "I just knew it."

"Congratulations, Maxwell," Mr. Librius said as he patted his son on the back. Sandy was completely lost.

"Did you apply to a school Early Action?" she asked, relatively

quietly, as Maxwell's mother broke away from her son. Maxwell looked at Sandy and before he had a chance to answer, his mother took him by the wrist and led him inside. Maxwell's father followed suit and soon Sandy was left all alone outside.

"Well I suppose you should come in, too, Sandra," Maxwell's father said as he stood at his front door. Sandy, now knowing how to react, went inside without saying a word.

Once inside, Sandy realized that the family room had been decorated in tones of blues and whites. They were school colors, but which school? A large cake that had "Congratulations" written on it in blue frosting sat in the middle of the family room table, and Sandy noticed that Mrs. Librius had already taken the liberty of cutting a slice for her son.

Maxwell. Sandy' eyes searched the small room for him and found him in one corner, reading and rereading a piece of paper with great intensity.

"I can't believe it," he cried as he looked up and smiled at his parents, but when he saw the confused expression upon the face of Sandy, his smile fell.

"Congratulations, Maxy," she said softly as she approached the boy, trying to look through the piece of paper in his hands to see the name of the school.

"Thanks," Maxwell said quietly as he tried, uselessly, to hide the piece of paper behind his back.

"Soâ€|are you going to tell me what school has the honor of having you as their newest student?" she asked as she stepped closer to him, now staring straight at him.

"You didn't tell her?" Mrs. Librius asked as she came between the two. "Well, Maxwell is often so busy, I suppose he often loses sight of the little things." She glanced at Sandy as she said this last part. Maxwell cringed at his mother's words but Sandy kept listening without a flinch. "My son was accepted to _Sorbonne Nouvelle_â€"you probably don't know what that is, do you? It's a school of Sorbonneâ€|_the _Sorbonne!" she turned around to face Maxwell and hugged him once again.

"Like the one in France?" Sandy asked as she took a deep breath. Maxwell tried to scan her face for any signs of emotionâ€"good or badâ€"but she was deliberately trying to keep her face clean of such things.

"Of course the one in France, which other one? I'm just so happy that you took Bijou Ribon's afvice and decided to apply!" Mrs. Librius cried. Maxwell flinched once again. He was hoping not to get Bijou's name into this.

"Bijou Ribon's advice?" Sandy asked quietly as she looked at the boy. "I didn't know she was a college counselor."

"Oh, well, I'm sure you know of all the things she can do. She is one of your good friends, after all, right? Oh she is so very lovely, wouldn't you agree?" Mrs. Librius asked Sandy, obviously comparing

the two girls. "Very goal-oriented."

"Mother," Maxwell said as he cast his head down. The truth was, Mrs. Librius had only met Bijou a handful of times and hardly ever got to talk with the girl. She just knew, from Maxwell, that Bijou happened to have a strong family history and was a good student, and that was all that really counted to the woman.

Sandy blinked a few times and stared around the room. She wanted to be in her room, under her sheet, and just stay there until the summer came so that she would never have to face these people ever again.

"Well, now, who am I to intrude on what is obviously a family moment?" She asked. She said a barely audible "Good-bye" and ran out the door.

Cats. Warm tears stung so much in the cold air. Thankfully, though, it was already starting to get dark, so maybe no one could notice how upset she was.

"Sandy," Maxwell cried as he ran out onto his front lawn. Sandy ignored him and kept walking down the street. "Sandy!" He nearly tripped over the gate as he ran after her. He ran in front of her and grabbed her shoulders.

"I'm sorry, I should've told you," he said as his chest stung a bit; it hurt to see that the tears that Sandy was crying were because of him.

"Yeah, really, but who am I compared to Bijou, right? We're not as close as you are with her," Sandy spat back as she shrugged his arms off of her. Maxwell walked beside her, looking sideways to keep a continuous view of her face.

"That was just my mother talking. You know how much-"

"I'm sure it was, Maxy. Now just go away," she said as she increased her pace.

"Why are you making such a big deal out of this? This is really big for me," Maxwell explained as he caught up with her. "I know I should've told you but this is like a dream come true."

"You should've told me. That's what you're supposed to do with your girlfriend, but don't worry: you never have to worry about that again," she exclaimed as she increased her pace as fast as she could and ran away, leaving Maxwell in a mess of emotions that he could not possibly sort out.

And as he watched her run, the first few snowflakes of the season fell, as if to come and wash everything that had just happened far, far away.

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Bijou put her hand against the giant glass window as she watched the flakes fall. Those were flakes, right? It was actually getting too

dark to tell. It felt strange to put her warm hand against the cold smoothness of the glass, yet she found herself smiling at this thought.

Her smile faded, though, as she remembered where she was. She stood in the highest room of a building none of her school friends knew existed. She looked at the room—the dark furniture, the large, monstrous desk—all of it was to be hers very soon.

She heard a swooshing sound and immediately turned around to face the glass double doors that were the entrance to the room from the rest of the building. She felt a knot come into her stomach as she tried to think of why she was called here.

"Mother," Bijou greeted as she crossed the large room. Her mother, Josie Ribon, gave one of the largest smiles she had ever given to the girl. Bijou was slightly alarmed by this, seeing as how her mother wasn't exactly into smiles and all.

"Is everything alright, mother?" Bijou asked. Josie wordlessly walked over to her desk and sat down in the overly-large leather seat. Bijou followed her mother and cautiously sat down in the seat across from her.

"No, eet eez not," her mother cried. Bijou's eyes immediately widened with fear. What could've happened? Was it the company? Did the stock market go against them or something? What could possibly be wrong?

"Eet eez better zhan alright!" Josie cried as she pulled open a drawer in her desk. She took out a large envelope and handed it to Bijou. The latter tentatively took the envelope, but upon recognizing the French insignia on the upper left side, she knew exactly what happened.

Josie Ribon stood and walked over to a set of French glass doors that lead out to the patio that was adjacent to the room. She stared out at the city below her, watching the snowflakes cumulate upon the tables and chairs that were currently unoccupied.

"Your fazzer wanted zhiz ever since 'e first brought you 'ere," she explained as Bijou read the acceptance letter in her hands. "Go zoo Sorbonne, like we did all those years ago, and learn to be zee leazer we alwayz knew you could be. Ahhhâ€|remember how zcared you were of zee balcony? Mon dieu! You were zo tinee, and now, you are a Sorbonne girl!"

Had Josie been paying careful attention to Bijou's reflection in the glass doors, she would've seen Bijou get up from her chair and kick and punch the air around her vehemently. However, Josie was lost in her own memories and was paying no attention to the state of distress her daughter was showing.

"This is wonderful," Bijou said as she stood up and crumpled the letter in her hands. Josie, upon hearing the paper's crackles, turned around and raised an eyebrow. "I'm so excited Iâ€|guess I couldn't control myself!"

"So, I'm guessing I got into the business academy?" Bijou asked.

"Well of course. 'ow could zhey accept a Ribon inzoo any ozzer major? You know zhat your great-great-great-grand-pere-"

"Was part of one of the first graduating classes of Sorbonne, I know," Bijou explained. She tossed the crumpled piece of paper onto the large desk and sighed.

"Soon, ma chere, you will be setting at zhiz very dezk. Eet eez your destiny!" Josie cried as she turned around and hugged her daughter. "Zhiz will all belong zoo you."

"Don't remind me," Bijou mumbled so that even her mother couldn't hear. She hugged her mother back, in an attempt to feign happiness, but she couldn't help but feel so horrible that her mother was so excited over this.

"I muzt eenvite all of our relatives, n'est-ce pas? And you muzt eenvite all of your leettle friendz! Anuzzer Ribon eez going zoo Sorbonne!" Josie cried as she released Bijou and went over to her seat. She went to her computer and started to type out a name of all of their relatives in France.

"Ummâ€|what exactly are we inviting zhemâ€"I mean themâ€"to?" Bijou's accent had a way of slipping back when she got a little upset, but Josie didn't seem to notice. The knot in her stomach increased as she saw her mother type more and more names.

"Your grazuation party, of courze," Josie explained without looking up from the screen. "You will be zee finest 'eiress zhat Sorbonne 'as ever seen, and everyone at zee party will be aware of zat," Josie exclaimed animatedly as she continued typing.

Bijou's knot became a full on stomachache. "Muzzerâ€"mother! Iâ€|eet iz a bit early for a party, don't you zh-zhhh-think?"

Josie instantly lifted her head from the screen. She, for the first time that night, figured out what was wrong with her daughter.

"You steel 'ave not zold zhem who you are?" she asked. Bijou put on a sheepish look and nodded slowly. She slid back into her chair as her mother scrutinized her with her sharp, gray eyes.

"Mother, it was your idea to hide the fact zatâ€"no, th_atâ€"I was an heiress when we first came here. Can't we keep it a secret for a little while longer?" Bijou asked as she looked at her mother pleadingly.

"Bijou, je ne comprends pas_. You 'ave nuzzing zoo be ashamed of. You are a Ribon, and you should be eekzited about zhiz!"

"Mais_-" (But)

"Your fazzer would 'ave been zo proud," Josie sighed as she closed her eyes and leaned back into the leathery plush of her chair.

Bijou's eyes widened for a split-second before she agreed.

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The next morning, Bijou walked into school in one of the worst moods she ever remembered having.

How to tell her mother? Would she be disappointing her father?

Business never interested her, and every time she was in that office, looking out those windows, imagined her name on a gold plateâ€|it never clicked. There had to be something wrong with that, right?

But there was still a chance, thoughâ€|Her mother had made her apply to Sorbonne Early Action. The deadlines for regular decision were in January. She could still apply to a programâ€"and a schoolâ€"that she really wanted to go to.

Sciences came to mind, but Bijou immediately shook that away. Science had to be the furthest thing from business. Her mother could never allow that. Science wasn't the dream that her father had for her all of those years agoâ€|

As she got to her locker, she was greeted by a familiar face leaning against her locker.

"Hey," Bijou said, honestly happy to see her friend. The person, in response, however, gave no smile. Their hands remained crossed over their chest and their eyes remained still as they stayed locked on Bijou's form.

"Everything alright?" Bijou asked, completely lost as to what the problem was.

"We need to talk, Bij," Sandy said as she stood up.

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At the time I wrote this chapter, I was being bothered with a whole bunch of college letters. That's why every scene basically revolves around this topic.

This story has been types up and ready for a few months now, but I have a pattern of updating and I actually wasn't sure how to update. Then I smacked myself on the forehead because I remembered:

Daichi makes an appearance in Petals.

And for those of you who read that story, he doesn't come soon, actuallyâ€|he comes after that 'big twist'. But when he comesâ€|it

becomes a key part of the story.

So yeah I basically am updating this story so that you guys get a feel for him.

Please read and review! I'd really appreciate it!

-CN

End
file.